OFFERING COMMUNITY GARDENERS: IDEAS ...INSPIRATION ...HEALTHFUL TIPS AND RESOURCES ...HEALTHY RECIPES

Happy New Year!

Unfortunately, the garden is almost at a standstill this month. It's cold, wet, and dormant. We depend on every leaf of lettuce and spinach, every broccoli floret, every kohlrabi and cabbage, every Brussels sprout. We're either glad we'd planted so much in the late summer and fall or regretting that we didn't. We eagerly anticipate the first asparagus spears and the first pods of the over wintering peas.
Aside from transplanting, most outside gardening activity is limited to pruning and spreading soil amendments. Too much digging is not a good idea, since the soil still retains a good deal of water and disturbing it too much will compact it. Think positive though... spring is just around the corner!

Garden hours are dawn 'til dusk

Trans Fatty Acids: What are they and why should I limit them?

Trans fatty acids, also called hydrogenated fats and/or trans fats, and are found in high concentrations in fast foods, and are also commonly found in snack foods, like crackers and cookies, and also peanut butter. If you look at a nutritional label on a bag of chips, for example, you will almost always find "partially hydrogenated soybean oil" or another type of hydrogenated oil. Margarine is a purely hydrogenated fat, and at one time it was thought to be much better than butter, but research is showing that people who have high blood levels of trans fatty acids are suffering from heart disease.

The process of converting a fat into a hydrogenated fat involves the infusion of hydrogen gas into vegetable oil, transforming the vegetable oil into a solid at room temperature (margarine and shortening are two examples). In the past it was thought that trans fats, were supposedly "better" than fat found in butter and lard, so the food industry came up with a way to "improve" the fat used in cooking, especially in fast foods and processed foods like, crackers and cookies.

So what should you watch out for when shopping. First, remember that everything in **moderation** is key. It's ok to have an occasional dinner at a fast food restaurant, or to have crackers and cookies from time to time, but try to avoid eating these foods on a daily basis. Check content labels on food packaging to see if the words "partially hydrogenated" are listed, and be aware of what you are buying and eating.

Christmas Year Round

Poinsettias are in full bloom in January, although most of us are putting Christmas decorations away and taking down the Christmas tree in early January, if not right after Christmas. You may be wondering what to do with your poinsettias. Good news! You can actually plant these festive flowers in your garden! Acclimating gift poinsettias to the cold outdoors before planting them into the garden is easy. First, clip overlong branches after the third node to encourage bushier growth. Place the plant in a sunny spot outdoors that's protected from wind for several hours each day, and a cool spot indoors at night. Keep its soil moist, and feed it a slow-release or quarter-strength regular fertilizer every week or so. After a week or two, plants should survive a full day outdoors in the protected spot. After another month, they can be successfully transplanted into the garden. Happy gardening!

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New Year's Resolutions

On New Year's Day, when the singing, fireworks and champagne toasts are over, many of us become more serious about life. We take stock and plan new courses of action to better our lives. This is best seen in one of the most popular customs and the key to the meaning of New Year's: making resolutions.

From New York to Paris to Sydney, interesting similarities arise as shown in two very common resolutions: people wanting to be more attractive by losing weight, and to be healthier by exercising more and smoking less. They want to do things better, become better people.

New Year's Day is the most active-minded holiday, because it is the one where people evaluate their lives and plan and resolve to take action. One dramatic example of taking resolutions seriously is the old European custom of: "What one does on this day one will do for the rest of the year." What unites this custom and the more common type of resolutions is that on the first day of the year people take their values more seriously.

It is New Year's, more than any other day, that makes the attainment of happiness more real and possible. This is the meaning of New Year's Day and why it is so psychologically important and significant to people throughout the world.

If people were to apply the value-achievement meaning of New Year's Day explicitly and consistently 365 days each year, they would be happier.

So every day, fill your champagne glass of life to the brim with values — and drink deep to your life and the joy that it can and should be.

Happy New Year. Happy life.

The gardening season officially begins on January 1st and ends on December 31st.
~Marie Huston

*Winter Sunshine Carrot-Orange Soup** *(serves 4)*

For quicker preparation, boil the carrots and garlic instead of roasting them. Roasting them, however, gives the soup a richer, deeper flavor.

- 1 pound carrots, peeled, washed, and cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 14-ounce can low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 14-ounce can non-fat evaporated milk
- Juice and zest of 1 orange
- 1¼ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice**
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 Granny Smith apple, chilled

Nutritional Information:
Calories: 171
Carbohydrate: 31 g
Protein: 9 g
Fat: 1 g
Fiber: 1 g
Cholesterol: 3 mg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat carrots and garlic lightly with vegetable cooking spray and roast, covered, until carrots are soft, about 1 hour. Transfer carrots and garlic to a blender; add chicken broth and puree until smooth. Transfer puree to a medium pot; whisk in milk, juice, zest and seasonings. Heat on low until warm throughout and no sharp garlic taste remains. Add water or milk to thin, if necessary.

To serve, slice pre-washed apple into matchstick-shaped slivers and divide among four bowls. Ladle the hot soup over the chilled apple, and serve immediately.

*This is a National Cancer Institute 5 a day recipe and provides one vegetable serving per person.

**In the spice section, this is a mixture of cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and allspice.